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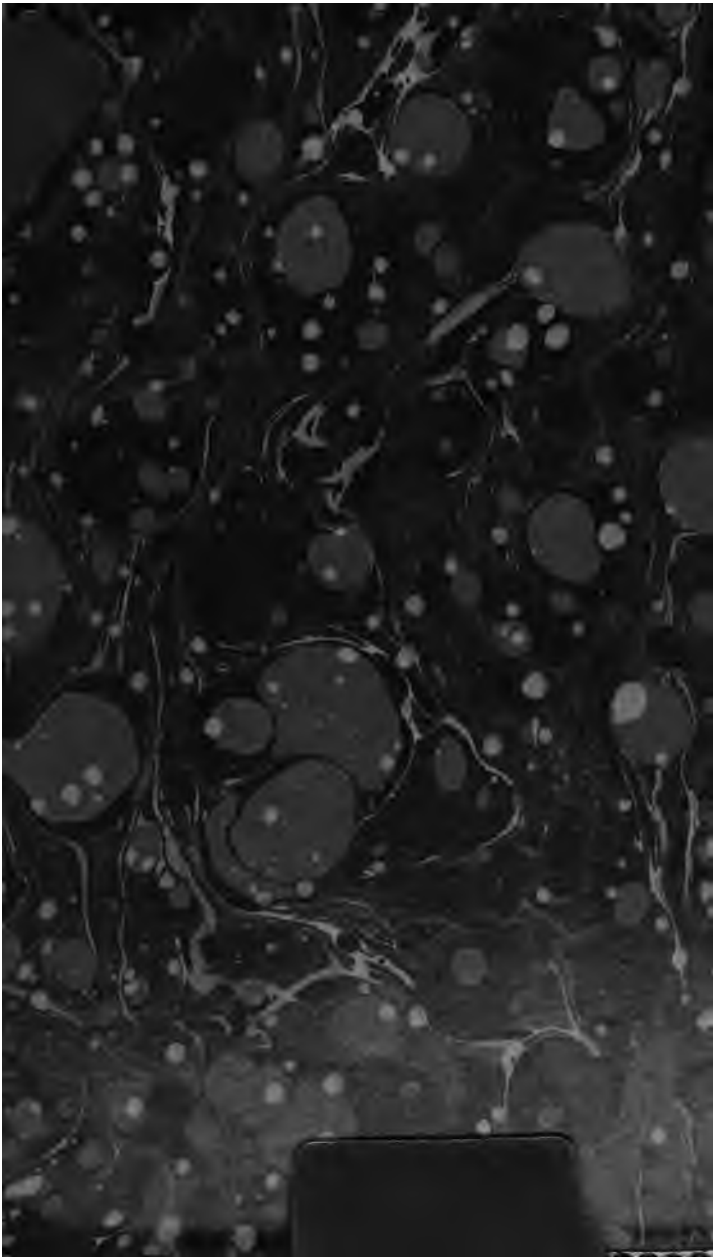
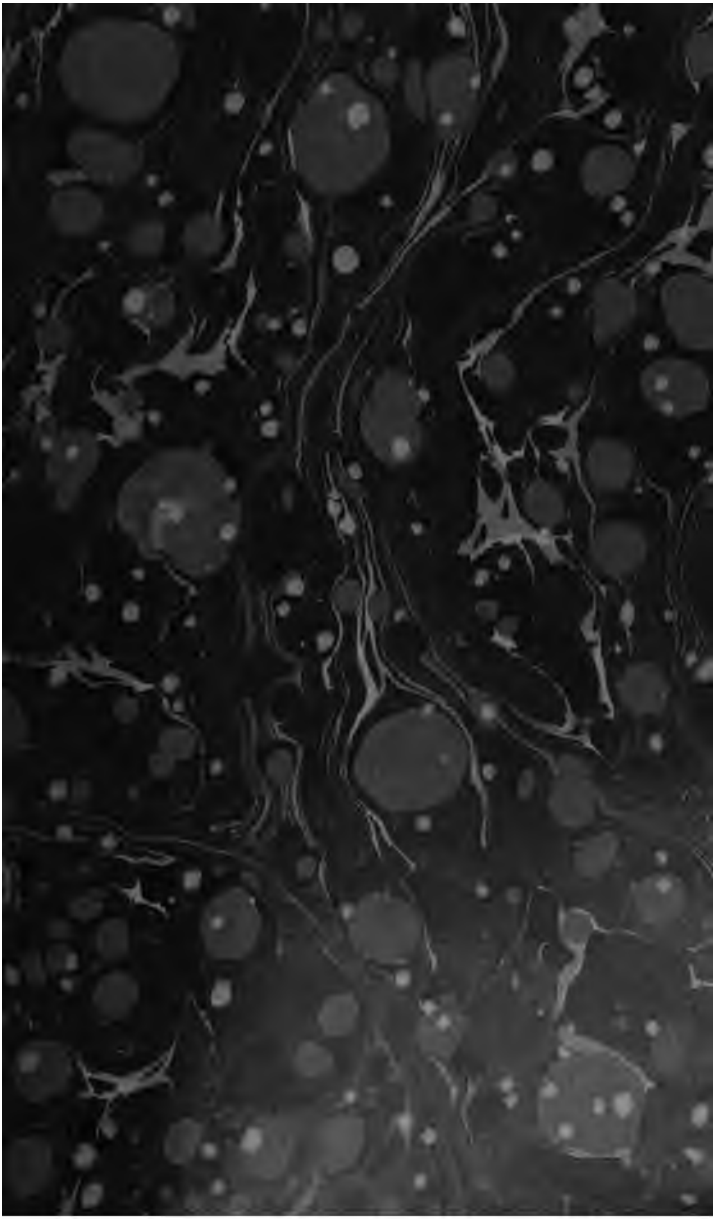
VERSES

BY

MARY GILMOUR





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VERSES

Mary Gilmour

Verses

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Mary Gilmore

Verses

by

Mary Gilmour

Printed for Private Circulation

Helensburgh
J. Lindsay Laidlaw
1902

Printed at
THE LINDSAY LAIDLAW PRESS
Helensburgh

In Affectionate Remembrance of my WIFE, *who has gone to her Rest, this little Book is sent to you by*

JOHN GILMOUR.

Mount Vernon,
Row,
Dumbartonshire.

PREFATORY

(By an old Friend of Mrs. Gilmour.)

MRS. GILMOUR, the writer of these verses, was born in the town of Beith, in Ayrshire, on 12th August, 1823. Her father, Mr. Hugh Brown of Broadstone, was well known and highly esteemed in that district. In the home there she came under those influences which fashioned her after life, and she was "brought up" in the good old Scottish way of instruction in the Bible and Shorter Catechism. Whatever other influences may have entered into her life, Mrs. Gilmour always expressed her indebtedness for the furnishing of her mind, and the early formation of her character, to maternal example and training. Specially in recent years did Mrs. Gilmour frequently refer to her early home life, and the impressions made on her in early life

by the mingled firmness and affection of her mother. These impressions clung tenaciously to her, and her heart refused to let them go. They taught her a truth, which she unweariedly proclaimed, that careful religious instruction is the corner-stone of all true education, and that a stern training in truth and duty for the godly upbringing of the young is one of the great needs of our time.

After her marriage in 1850 she accompanied her husband to the United States of America. Eight years of her life were spent in Richmond, Virginia. For that city—the gay capital of the old Dominion—she cherished a warm affection. The kindly welcome which, as a young bride, she received from the hospitable and chivalrous Virginians, was always a cherished memory. She was there before "the war," and came much into contact with that type of old English life which is yet to be met with in some of the families of the old colony. During her residence in Virginia, friendships were formed which lived in her heart through the forty subsequent years. Friends from Richmond always found a hearty welcome at Mount Vernon.

The latter half of Mrs. Gilmour's life was spent on the shore of the Gareloch. During those forty years her two main interests in life were doing deeds of kindness to the needy and quiet meditation. Many people in Helensburgh and its neighbourhood were the beneficaries of her systematic yet unobtrusive kindness. In her discriminating giving, as in all relations of life, she showed a strong character, and complete self-reliance. She loved the simple things of life, not its wealth, and pomp, and show, but talks with friends, and music, and the laughter of little children. She believed in the maxim that human beings have just as much vanity as they lack understanding. In her frequent visits to North Berwick she found more real enjoyment in talking with a ragged boy, or a bare-footed girl playing on the sands, than in meeting with the wealthy and fashionable. Mrs. Gilmour had a quaint humour peculiarly Scottish, and with a command of the old Scottish dialect possessed by few her humour frequently found pithy expression in that language, so suited alike for humour and pathos. Her keen sense of humour, however, was always held in check by her sense of the seriousness

nature and God. Many of the verses show, wh
was conspicuous in her unwearied kindness to th
needy, that behind a retiring life there was a natu
full of tenderness, with sympathies at once delica
and prompt. Those who had access to the deep
passages of her experience, know how truly tho
verses express the strong religious faith, under th
influence of which Mary Gilmour lived her qui
and beneficient life.

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A Prayer.

OH ! Jesus Saviour, Lord of Love,
  In my extremity,
When I so weak and troubled am,
  Hide not Thy face from me.

Thou who didst suffer on the Cross
  For our iniquities,
Grant us Thy grace, and strength to bear
  Whate'er before us lies.

For we are weary of this load,
  And cannot stand alone ;
Enlighten thou our darkness now,
  Thou Everlasting One !

List to our quest, and answer us,
  When we cry unto Thee,
Stretch forth Thy hand, and guide our way :
  'Tis dark ! we cannot see.

A Prayer.

Give us full trust, that Thou wilt guide
  Us on from day to day !
Whene'er we falter, take our hand,
  And lead us in the way.

When our long journey shall be past,
  And we at last "at Home,"
We'll know we had sweet company :
  We never were alone !

The Good Soldier of Jesus Christ.

THE storm is raging all around, the times so troublous are;
On every side we hear the sound of fast-approaching war.
Gird on thine armour manfully, true soldiers of the Cross!
And bravely fight the fight of faith, wherein there is no loss.

No loss, all gain, to him who stands, unyielding in the fight,
Heed not the murmur of the throng, "fear God and do the right!"
Prepare thy feet with Gospel peace, thy loins gird well with Truth;
The shining breastplate Righteousness, let it adorn thy youth.

Then boldly take within thy hand the sharp two-
edged Sword,
Elsewhere 'tis called the Spirit's Sword, which is
the Word of God;
Then take the Shield of Faith, wherewith you'll
quench each fiery dart
Of every follower of him who wears the blackest
heart.

The Helmet of Salvation fix well upon your head,
And ever keep your mind quite clear, attend to
what's here said;
Pray always with the Spirit's power, yea, never
cease to pray,
And watch, with earnest thoughtfulness, the coming
of that day.

"Clean Every Whit."

OH! what a glorious cleansing!
'T is perfect and complete;
Not only does He wash my head,
But deigns to wash my feet.
The crimson stream is flowing
From His own wounded side;
His deepest cry of anguish
Resounds both far and wide.

He puts away our every fault,
Cleanses from grossest sin;
And should there linger one dark spot,
'Tis blotted out by Him.
The crimson stream is flowing, &c., &c.

He girds Himself around for work,
Stoops down upon His knees,
And clears away the smallest spot
Which His love only sees.
The crimson stream is flowing, &c., &c.

And even our most secret sin,
Hugged to our bosom dear,
He drags it open to our sight,
And makes us conscience clear.
The crimson stream is flowing, &c., &c.

"Your Reward is in Heaven."

ALAS ! alas ! what is our life ?
  A fact ! a force ! a fear !
A wilderness of tangled weeds !
  A pain ! a sigh ! a tear !

My life's been spent, and vainly spent ;
  For others I did toil :
The purpose of my soul well meant,
  Ungracious was the soil.

No more proud looks and scornful words,
  Which hack, like blunted knife ;
We're raised above these little things,
  Into that higher life.

Yet life's endeavour is not lost,
  If done in his great name ;
At last, when we see face to face,
  We'll see 'twas not in vain.

Our mind's eye sees a home beyond,
  A place of rest in view ;
"All old things now are passed away,"
  "Yea, all things now are new."

Thy Brother's Keeper.

ART thou thy brother's keeper?
  Hast thou kept true thy trust?
Or is his banner, carelessly,
  Now trailing in the dust?
He bound himself to bear't aloft;
  But weary grew the load,
And long before the sun went down,
  He drop't it on the road.

Art thou thy brother's keeper?
  Dost hear that cry of pain?
And canst thou shut thine ears, and leave
  Distress to plead in vain.
Around thy suff'ring brother throw
  Thy sheltering arms so strong;
Shield him from all that's harsh, unkind,
  And everything that's wrong.

Thy Brother's Keeper.

Art thou thy brother's keeper?
  The wee bairns cry for bread!
Oh, never let it once be said
  Ye cared not what they said.
Their guileless heart and prattling tongue
  Command us to give heed;
And ne'er let it be said of them,
  They perished from sheer need.

Art thou thy brother's keeper?
  Believe not every tale:
Gently move on, throughout life's way,
  As in a flowery dale;
For bitter words but fester strife,
  And strike as with a dart;
Peacefully move on within your sphere,
  And choose a quiet part.

And having done your life's great work,
  Some souls to purify,
Some weary, way-worn travellers
  To rid of many a sigh,
The great accomplishment takes place,
  The bright day-dawn appears,
And earthly homes will then be filled
  With joy and hearty cheer.

All Things Praise Thee.

WHEN I go out, at early morn,
To be myself alone,
I'm not the only thing astir
Around our cottage home.

The birds are whistling cheerily,
There's music in the breeze,
And murm'ring sounds from insect tribes,
And whisperings 'mong the trees.

And then there's that mysterious sound,
As tho' all things would sing—
A moving life, within, around,
Revival of the Spring!

All these were dead, and firmly bound
In Winter's cold embrace;
But Spring came, wooing sweetly round—
New life in them I trace.

So with our cold and deadened hearts,
Bound with an icy chain,
A breath of Love just snaps a link,
And freed-men we remain.

"We all do Fade as a Leaf."

OH! so weary, eerie, dreary!
As I sit and dream alone;
In my thoughts there's nothing cheery,
For my wife and bairns are gone.

As I day-dream of the future,
So I ponder o'er the past,
And my sad experience tells me
Nothing here can ever last.

See the rosebud blooming brightly
On the parent mother stem;
Let a chill frost nip its blossom,
And a strong wind blow! *What then?*

So, with all earth's greatest treasures,
They just come, and then they're gone;
There's a sorry heart within us,
And a "vacant chair" at home.

"*We all do Fade as a Leaf.*"

Cling but lightly to your blessings,
  Let them be as by God lent;
There's a meaning in each sorrow,
  'Tis in mercy it is sent.

For, when dawns the endless morrow,
  After life's dark, saddest night,
We will praise Him for the sorrow,
  And His dealings, which were right.

"There Shall be no Night There."

ACROSS the waste of waters deep,
  I look with many a sigh,
And yet a thin white line of light
  Aneath the sky doth lie.
All here is dark and desolate,
  Around there's nought but gloom;
Nought in the air but dark despair—
  In truth a living tomb!

And is there in that line of light
  Hope for a coming day?
Oh! would the sun but once come out,
  Shed but a single ray!
I see the moon is beaming, but
  It hides behind the clouds;
And they, in fleecy garments grey,
  Look like so many shrouds.

I hear a sound! 'tis but the chuck
  Of sea-gulls on the wing;
I would they more melodious were;
  But, then, they cannot sing!
Oh! had I but their wings I'd fly
  To yonder line of light:
Here all is dismal, dark, and dead—
  There nothing here but night!

The Ministry of Suffering.

A WEARY life our young friend had,
Shut off from friends and home;
The nature of his trouble made
It wise to be alone.
He had his intervals of health,
His moments of clear light;
At other times, all, all seemed dead,
And dark as blackest night!

Long did he suffer thus, poor man,
But never did he pine;
Tho' hard the conflict, still he felt,
"*Thy Will!* but never mine;
In Thy hands calmly would I lie,
Tho' hard it is to bear:"
He grudges not the broken years,
Now that he knows *all there!*

The Ministry of Suffering.

That mystery of suffering,
  Beyond all human ken,
Which mars so much life's honest work
  Of some true-hearted men;
We cannot know, we cannot guess
  The meaning of His plan;
Who leaves alone some sorry soul!
  And tries a better man.

Enough for us, His ways are right,
  Tho' doomed we are to mourn;
We stretch our hand to pluck the rose,
  Instead, we grasp the thorn!
Our grieved soul seeks for some light
  To brighten up our way;
But better "weep with those that weep,"
  Than mingle with the gay.

Life and Death.

WHAT is life? A constant dying
To the things which charm us most!
Ever grudging! ever grieving!
Ever mourning something lost.

What is death? A constant living
In the hearts of those we love;
In their memory as unsullied
As the pure and spotless dove.

But there is a life that liveth,
For God's people held in store;
Rest and peace and joy receiving,
And this life for evermore.

And there is a death that dieth,
Reaching far beyond the tomb;
Dread despair and deepest anguish
Wail together in the gloom.

Friends, let's live the future morrows
As we would when they are past;
Then shall come the grand re-union!
When we meet "*at Home*" at last.

Birth-Day Wish.

WHAT can I wish for thee, this day,
More than thy God has given?
A life of peace, down here below,
Foretaste of life in heaven;
A calm, unruffled rest, down here,
By no storm rudely driven:
Content to stay, content to go
To yonder rest in heaven.

The Ministry of Flowers.

YE weary flowers! why were ye plucked
From off your mother stem?
Why were ye snatched from earthly bliss
To please the whims of men?

But no! for better things than that
You were torn from your home:
To please a little suffering child,
Who's dying all alone.

She breathes more softly, seeing you,
Thinking you look so pure;
And as she sees your hanging heads,
More patient she'll endure.

Poor little child! she too a flower
Plucked from the parent stock,
Kicked here and there and everywhere,
And bruised with many a knock.

But now the dark hour's drawing near,
  For death is close at hand;
She's dreaming of her cart and spade,
  And houses on the sand.

All's done that care and skill can do—
  The child they cannot save;
But gathered up the snowdrops are,
  And scattered on her grave!

Trust.

THE length, the breadth, the depth, the height,
  Can't measured be by line,
Of that great vast eternity
  Of never-ending time;
But if we the reward would gain,
  The golden circlet win,
We'll follow Christ frae day to day,
  And lippen mair to Him.

What matters it, how vast the space,
  Or yet how long the time?
If I am sure that I am His,
  And sure that He is mine.
Then what our hand finds, let us do,
  Wi' smeddum in each limb;
Aye follow Christ, frae day to day,
  And lippen mair to Him.

And when at length the moment comes,
  When "time shall be no more,"
Eternity will no look lang,
  Wi' what we have in store.
Let's gather up our waning strength
  Before our eyes get dim,
And follow Christ, frae day to day,
  And lippen a' to Him.

Jesus said: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

HELP me, Oh Lord, to bear this load,
Help me this very day;
I fear to walk without Thy hand,
For I'd be sure to stray.
I've borne this burden of my cares
And worries every day;
I cast it on Thee! lead Thou on!
I follow, "*Thou the way.*"

Help me, Oh Lord, to bear my load
In youth's young early day;
When life's keen relish still is there,
Temptations pave my way;
Help me to bear it, whereso'er
In slippery paths of youth;
I lean on Thee, Thou, Father God,
Behold! "*Thou art the Truth.*"

"*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*"

Help me, Oh Lord, to bear my load,
  Help me when death is nigh;
When struggling thro' the Jordan's waves
  I've left no power to cry.
If Thy will? let all pain be past,
  All struggling, and all strife;
Just resting on the Almighty Arms,
  Sleep calmly! "*Thou'rt the Life.*"

Help me, Oh Lord, to bear this load,
  And help me even now!
I feel the cold chill on my cheek;
  The death damp on my brow.
I've borne this burden of my sins
  And sorrows all alone!
I cast it on Thee, Saviour dear!
  Thou did'st for sin atone.

The Web o' Life.

THE web o' life is in the loom,
  The shuttles gaun baith late and soon;
Mind ye the wark's a' for aboon,
  To be judged in the morning.

The warp is a' the straight intent,
The woof the mony deeds well meant;
These interweave wi' a' that's lent
  Unto the Lord till morning.

Salvation is the web o' life,
Wi' fears and trembling muckle strife—
Combat your foes aye to the knife,
  If ye'd hae a bright morning.

And when the web is dune and drest,
Think na' for this wark ye'll be blest:
In Christ's own Righteousness, great test,
  Ye'll enter in the morning.

A Sabbath Meditation.

IS anything so sweet on earth
  As Thine own Sabbath day?
The holy calm, the quiet rest,
  The sweet thoughts by the way,
As gathering to meet around
  The footstool of Thy grace,
We bend our heads in earnest prayer
  That we would see Thy face.

We see Thee, Father, as we stand
  In reverence and awe;
Even as the Prophet Moses did
  In giving forth the law.
Oh! may we learn Thy law to love,
  May it delight our heart,
And from Thy precepts every one,
  Oh! may we ne'er depart.

"*He will Keep the Feet of His Saints.*"

Spur on the lazy, laggin' feet that dauner on at best,
Leavin' the dry an' dusty road amang the flooers tae rest;
Oh! keep them i' the narrow way, an' gar them rin apace
Wi' growin' ardour, till at last they win the heavenly race.

Support the lame an' crippled feet slow hirplin' up the brae,
Aye haudin' bravely on, tho' oft wi' hert and spearit wae;
Fulfil Thine ain sweet promise, gar the lame man loup wi' glee,
An' rin an' no be weary, be the pathway ne'er sae hie.

Bind up the tender, bleedin' feet, sair cut wi mony a stane
Alang life's rough an' thorny road, yet pressin' on fu' fain;
Oh! lead them 'mang the pastures green, alang the burnie's side,
Up tae the Faither's mansions, whaur they'll evermair abide.

"He will Keep the Feet of His Saints."

An', Lord, the patient, ploddin' feet that follow on content
Whaure'er Thou leadest, smooth or rough, o' them do Thou tak tent;
That wi' a licht an' springin' step they'll climb the steepest brae,
An' ere they ken, life's journey's dune, an' they can rest for aye.

The Last Prayer.

KEEP me, Jesus, ever near Thee,
Keep me ever by Thy side;
All that's here is passing ever—
Thou alone doth aye abide.

When temptations wiled me from Thee,
Back in penitence I turned,
And in sadness craved the favour
Which but lately I had spurned.

I have stayed myself upon Thee,
Rested on Thee day by day;
Other props have fallen from me—
Thou hast ever been my stay.

In the darkness haud my haun',
And haud it wondrous ticht!
Keep near me thro' the valley,
Until I reach the licht.

The Last Prayer.

Be wi' me there, I pray as well,
  The glory is sae great;
Cover me wi' Thine ain pure robe,
  And let me near Thee wait.

For I would see the Father God
  Who dwells in yonder land,
And yet I fear to go alone;
  Oh, Jesus! take my hand.

"Hope of the Promise."

"HOPE of the Promise!" anchor sure,
Drop it within thy heart;
Fasten it there and rest assured
Nothing shall hurt thy bark.

"Hope of the Promise!" long since made
To men of the long ago,
"Who did not receive it;" for left to us
This knowledge was to know.

"Hope of the Promise!" now fulfilled,
All ages now adore
God and Father who was and is,
And shall be evermore.

"Hope of the Promise!" let our trust
Upon that Hope repose;
Our confidence in full content,
Knowing our Father knows.

"Hope of the Promise!" shed it abroad
Thro' ages yet to come:
God the Father, and God the Son,
And Spirit Three in One.

"Give Me Thine Heart."

HOW shall I come to Thee, my God,
With what gifts shall I come;
Shall thousand rams Thee satisfy
On hillsides that do roam?

The cattle on a thousand hills
To Thee do all belong;
The birds that twitter in the trees
With all their glorious song.

The fish in waters great and small
Are also Thine, oh God!
The creeping things upon the earth,
And those beneath the sod.

Shall my first-born be given to Thee,
Child that I love so well;
Shall all of these quite expiate
The sin I dare not tell?

"*Give Me Thine Heart.*"

No! God a greater gift does claim,
  A greater gift does seek:
He seeks thine heart to purify,
  And keep it ever meek.

Give Him thine heart for Jesus' sake,
  Who died that you might live;
Thy trespasses and all thy sins
  He ever will forgive.

Come boldly to the Throne of Grace
  Of Him who reigns above;
Come and adore the King of Kings,
  For He's a God of love.

One Year Nearer.

BY one year nearer to the solemn change
That comes by death to all;
By one year nearer to the silent grave,
Where rests both great and small.

One year nearer to our sainted mother,
Whose love was all life-long;
Who watched o'er us, and when our heart was weary,
Soothed us with many a song.

By one year nearer to one cherub child,
Long now beneath the sod;
An angel bore it far from us on high
To the bright world of God.

By one year nearer to the vanish'd hand,
Whose grasp we seem to feel;
By one year nearer to the manly form
Whose heart was true as steel.

One Year Nearer.

By one year nearer to our risen Lord,
  Victorious o'er the tomb,
Who having conquer'd death and hell, thus shed
  His light across the gloom.

Nearer to know the very deepest love
  When Christ did kiss the rod;
We reach the hidden mystery of years,
  The perfect love of God.

We work, we watch, we wait, we trust in Thee;
  We'll patient ever be,
And when Thou com'st at last to claim Thine own,
  May we Thy glory see!

The Felt Presence.

DID you never hear a voice long mute
Come stealing on the air?
Did you never feel a hand long cold
Clasp yours in times of care?
Two violet eyes look up in yours,
As only these eyes can;
Come, do the right, my dearest dear,
And show yourself a man.

Those eyes do search my very soul,
The lone lights in them true;
As pure as yonder vault of Heaven,
With all its azure blue.
I cannot move from 'neath that gaze
Of love go where I will;
E'en tho' I move across the sea,
The vision's with me still.

The Felt Presence.

Each morning brings an influence,
  An ever present power!
Which binds me aye to do the right,
  When comes temptation's hour.
How does this presence haunt me so?
  What evil have I done?
That thus my steps are dogged each day;
  I'm never let alone.

'Tis God's own spirit working
  Thro' love still in your mind;
With silken cords and tender ties
  He would your heart thus bind.
List to your absent dear one's voice,
  Be led by that moist eye;
That unseen hand will surely lead
  You to the home on high.

"I'll Lay Me Down to Sleep."

"I'LL lay me down to sleep," for I would rest
From all this worry and this weary strife,
For I have found that all the world's unrest
Is not life-giving—not what I call life.

"I'll lay me down to sleep," poor faithless friends
Have quenched the little life that once I had;
I'm spurned by all, and e'en my dearest tends
To make me feel this world is nought but bad.

"Ill lay me down to sleep" my body frail,
Harassed by pain and vexed by many a sore,
We truly spend our years as well-told tale;
Not this for me! Ah no! the evermore.

"I'll lay me down to sleep," hard lot have I;
Aneath! the earth with all for which I've striven;
Above! the starry, blue, and clear ethereal sky,
And further on above—the Heaven of Heaven.

"I'll lay me down to sleep," and I would wake
To rest for ever near the Eternal Throne!
Oh! quickly, Guardian Angel, quickly take,
And taking me, make me Thy very own.

The Return.

WEARY and worn and sad I crawl
  Back to my ain auld hame;
There mony a blessing waits for me,
  Blessings frae every ane.

I've still a weary road tae gang,
  For I hae wandered far;
Lord, guide me safely in the way,
  Be Thou my guiding star.

Straight tae my hame! ne'er tae the richt
  Nor tae the left I turn;
My heart is loupen ower wi' joy,
  Within my heart does burn.

I canna rest, I canna think,
  I canna speak at a';
Oh! dinna let me be owre proud,
  Oh! dinna let me fa'.

The Return.

For meek and lowly wad I walk
  In the way that I hae ta'en,
And by and bye afore I ken
  I'll fin' mysel' at hame.

It's a' been gi'en, there's nane o' mine,
  It a' cam' frae the best
O' givers, and ere lang
  He's gaun to gae me rest.

A Contrast.

IT'S no that I wad say at a'
  I see wi' clearer e'en,
Or that my daily walk and talk
  Compares wi' yours, my frien';
But thro' your wee poetic lilt
  There's something that you lack;
Ye're surely no on the main line,
  I'm sure ye're aff the track!

It's gran' tae breathe the pure fresh air—
  In that there's naething wrang;
It's gran' tae hear the birdies sing
  Wi' notes sae clear and lang;
But on God's day, God's holy day,
  Oor thochts should maist be given
Tae worship Him in His ain hoose,
  And think o' Him in Heaven.

A Contrast.

Birds canna sing the sang that we,
  His ransomed, hae tae sing,
Nor yet can they, wi' a' their powers,
  Stretch out on faith's brisk wing,
Tae flee far aff abune the skies,
  Tae yonder heaven, oor hame,
And noo let me jist say again—
  They're singing birds alane!

'Twas on the morn o' this bless'd day
  That Christ oor Saviour rose,
He burst the bonds o' death and hell
  That nothing wad oppose
Tae keep us frae His riven side,
  And frae His loving breast:
In Him we have forgiveness,
  In Him we hope tae rest.

Your Life is but a Vapour.

LOOK at these clouds against that azure sky,
How fast they travel in their aerial flight;
Those little ones mean nothing, more or less,
Soon drop away, without them all is bright!

But look still further; see those larger ones
Bent on some work before they leave this scene;
They sweep aside all barriers by the way,
With generous influence they for ever teem.

But mark those dark, mysterious ones beyond,
There's mischief brooding! See the lightning flash!
And hear the thunder roll along the sky!
As shoot out cannon with malignant dash!

So is our life: a passing cloud at best,
Caught up in sunbeams, or distilled in tears;
For, carried by the light or stormy clouds,
We ever vacillate, 'twixt hopes and fears.

1st January, 1900.

OH! wherefore over fiction's woes
Dost thou shed many tears?
Come to yon garret, there see one
Bent with the weight of years,
Trembling with cold, and hunger too,
She crouches on the floor;
No fire, no bread, no comfort left,
Nought but the closed door,—
And there she prays.

She's battled sore with life's stern blasts,
And evermore anew
She's gathered up her failing strength
With courage brave and true;
But by repeated efforts spent,
With no one by her side,
She struggles hard, but fails to stem
The fast incoming tide—
But still she prays.

1st January, 1900.

Weary and faint, worn in each limb,
  And pressed with many a doubt,
She hears a footstep on the stair,
  A rustling sound without.
With all the glad and bounteous cheer,
  Gently the stranger crept
To crouching form, upon her knees:
  Ah me! her mother slept
    The sleep of death.

"Come unto Me all Ye that Labour and are Heavy Laden."

HEART broken and weary, where'er thou mayst be
There are no words like these words for comforting thee;
When sorrows come round thee like waves of the sea,
The Saviour says cheerfully—"Come unto Me."

There are no words like these words, "Come hither and rest,"
Afflicted, forsaken, the thorn in thy breast;
All lonely and helpless He thought upon thee,
And He said in His tenderness, "Come unto Me."

O Saviour, my spirit would fain be at rest,
There are passions which rage like a storm in my breast;
O! show me the road along which I must flee,
And strengthen me, Saviour, to come unto Thee.

Come unto Me all Ye that Labour and are Heavy Laden.

I will walk thro' the world with these words on my heart,
Thro' sorrow or sin they shall never depart;
And when dying I hope He will whisper to me,
I have loved thee and saved thee—"Come sinner to Me."

A Common Experience.

WE drifted to Indifference,
That barren, desert isle,
Which shelters many a lonely heart
Bereft of kindly smile.
Each in the way chose by each self,
Regardless passed along,
While, sneeringly, the world meanwhile,
The placid world looked on!

Oh! had we steered our vessel to
The harbour of Content?
How many rocks and shoals escaped,
Encountered where we went?
How many storms of wind and waves,
Which near o'erwhelmed our bark?
How many days of needless pain,
And nights so deadly dark?

In mercy, southern winds arose
  And bore our bark along
To sunnier climes, skies clad in gold,
  And to the land of song.
Amidst the radiance of the scene,
  Not one thing did we lack,
For, as if e'en to crown our joy,
  The grand old love came back.

The Threshold of the Year.

I LINGER on the threshold,
  For one last look behind;
The landscape in the distance
  And friends so true and kind;
But now the shadows deepen,
  Darkness is settling down;
In vain I look around me,
  For some whom I have known.

This is a gloomy picture,
  But there's a brighter side,
In yon wee secret chamber,
  My loving friends abide.
We have our fond communings,
  At gloamin, in the e'en,
Tho' all our loving intercourse,
  Is by the world unseen.

But I must pass the threshold,
  The night is wearing on,
And lonely hearts are waiting,
  For work which must be done.
Let's lift the heavy burden,
  The wae and weary cheer;
Our hearts will be the lighter:
  My frien', "A Gude New Year."

Three Azaleas.

HOW beautiful are nature's flowers,
In all their grand array;
'Tis like a little heaven on earth,
This bright mid-summer day!

That lovely golden group of three,
So pleasing to the eye;
The blending of those sunny hues,
Set in the deepest dye.

Yet they will fade and leave us soon
To mourn their beauty's death;
It is the law of all things here
That they must yield their breath.

For one short day they are our own,
To-morrow they are not;
This world is but a passing scene,
And ours a changing lot.

If this were all! if on our hearts
  The impress was of earth!
Would that the flowers ne'er bloomed at all,
  And we had ne'er had birth.

But better things are yet in store,
  For God's a God of love!
Beyond the flowers, beyond this scene,
  There is a home above.

Our Golden Wedding.

SAE lang ago! sae far away,
And yet I mind sae weel,
When first ye cam' about oor house,
A handsome, strappin' chiel!
I had a walth o' followers,
But nane I lo'ed sae weel;
Frae very first, afore ye spak',
I kent my heart ye'd steal.

Yet sure, I gied it freely then,
Syne, wi' a maiden's pride,
I promised to be a' yer ain,
Your loving, faithful bride—
To love, obey, and cherish you,
As lang as life did last!
Have na' I, Robin, kept my vow,
Aye kept it firm and fast?

Our Golden Wedding.

It's fifty years since you and me
  Cam' hame as man and wife;
We lo'ed each ither for oorsel's,
  And led a quiet life.
In course of time a blessing cam',
  Our first sweet baby child!
A little lump of love and joy,
  With eyes so gently mild.

Our wee bit bud of promise
  Was knarled upon the tree—
One sigh! she soughed hersel' awa',
  Just lying on my knee.
She's blooming noo beyond the stars,
  Where flowers ne'er fade nor die;
She sweetly rests, on Jesus' breast,
  In yon dear home on high.

And noo, gudeman! in looking back
  At times we hae gaen through,
There's naething we can gi'e but thanks;
  But surely they are due
To Him who thro' sae mony years
  Bless'd basket and our store—
To Him let's gi'e our grateful thanks,
  Bless'd be He evermore.

Contentment.

TO all the gifts that you have got
  Add yet another to the lot—
  Contentment with your station;
So many live to make a show,
So many beck and bow so low,
  All for world's adoration!

We nothing brought into this sphere,
But sin and sorrows far and near
  Each other's habitation;
If we have meat, if we have clothes,
A shelter when the cauld win' blows,
  We've surely got our ration.

Tread lightly on your neighbour's toes,
And never try to pull his nose,
  Tho' he may be behind you,
For wit and wisdom at you hurled,
Would conquer quite your ain wee world!
  Aye even sorely grind you.

Contentment.

A quiet life, wi' neebour frien',
A wee bit chat, wi' books at e'en,
  Gives gentle excitation;
Wi' a' thae comforts be content,
And let your riches aye be lent
  To God, thro' a' the nation.

Dare not to murmur at your lot,
You yet may find 'tis Heaven's own spot,
  Your present habitation,
But like the apostle Paul of old,
Content to live, content to mould,
  So that you gain salvation.

Mount Vernon, Row, Dumbartonshire.

The Trysting Place.

WHEN the southern wind does blow,
With its soothing, balmy breeze,
When the flowers begin to blow,
And the birds sing on the trees,
Then I'll hear thy voice again
In a dreamy, sweet refrain,
For thou hast long absent been,
In a far countree.

I will seek thee in the glade,
When the day begins to die,
To the trysting place we made,
I will gladly, quickly hie,
For I know thou shalt be there,
Thou sweet fairest of the fair!
So long thou hast absent been
In a far countree.

The Trysting Place.

Shall I find thee in the wood,
  Or upon the mountain side?
Shall I find thee e'er again
  In this world so large and wide?
No! our trysting place was high,
Far above the bright blue sky,
With the angels ever nigh,
    In that "Blessed Countree."

The Young Divine.

COME doucely frae the inner room,
  Wi' circumspect-like mien,
And dinna think aboot yersel',
  Nor think ye're being seen.

Tak' patience in the gangin' up,
  Lest ye trip on the stair;
Enter the pulpit, sit ye doon,
  And offer up a prayer.

Then staun' ye up and look aroun',
  And gae the folk a glour!
This action's sure to mak' them think
  Ye are a man o' power.

After anither fervent prayer,
  Gae oot the psalm, or hymn;
See tae yer personalities,
  And mind yer collar's trim.

The Young Divine.

The psalm, or hymn, has now been sung,
  Then langest morning prayer;
Read now a chapter o' the Word,
  And see ye've plenty air.

The text gae oot wi' muckle birr!
  Then place yer notes gae near;
Begin your sermon slow, but sure,
  Then glint at them that steer.

And if ye come to any point
  Ye wish sair to impress,
Bang weel the Bible wi' your nieves!
  Lay on't wi' muckle stress!

Then gae a cough, and blaw yer nose,
  'Twill be a starting point;
They'll a' be blawin', roun' and roun',
  Like noses oot o' joint!

Noo, dinna taigle lang at a',
  For some are sleeping soun'!
But close the Bible wi' a bang,
  And gae oot some nice tune.

The Young Divine.

Wee Jock and Jenny, wha's first day
  This is to sing God's praise,
Are wunnerin' if it's wat or dry?
  So's they'll no spile their claes.

The congregation skales at last,
  Each has his own comment;
'Twas gran' the day! a clever chiel!
  Wi' him we're weel content.

Influenza.

I AFTEN think aboot ye a'
At gloamin's e'en and morning's daw',
While fashed sae sair wi' croupy craw,
I lie wi' influenza.

I wunner hoo yer time gangs bye?
Is't dark, or licht noo, in your sky?
Or are ye heavin' mony a sigh
Wi' this same influenza.

It's hard to say what ye are at!
Clourin' the doug, aiblins the cat?
Or, in your bed, just lying flat,
Fair doon wi' influenza.

The ailment is in fashion noo,
It racks the body thro' and thro';
Yer een are red, yer colour's blue,
When ha'en the influenza.

Influenza.

A dook in water, mair than loo,
Wi' mustard poultice thro' and thro',
A glycerine lozenge in the mou'
Is guid for influenza.

A penny "doup" rubbed on yer nose!
A cogie fu' o' guid het brose;
And mair than that, but, guidness knows
What's guid for influenza.

I hope when I dae hear again
That ye are free frae cauld and pain,
And that ye constantly abstain
Even frae influenza.

I Trust, for Thou art True.

If thou wert not just what thou art,
  How deep would be my woe!
Now that I've trusted thee awhile,
  To turn, and have to go!
Nay, nay, my friend! these bitter thoughts
  I ne'er can think of you;
I hear thy voice, I see thy smile,
  I trust, for thou art true.

If thou wert not just what thou art,
  'Twere dead, and darkest night,
To lose the sympathy of hearts,
  And yet be in thy sight!
A noble thought inspires me now,
  'Tis joined in by the few—
God and the right, and friendship's cause,
  I trust, for thou art true.

A Reply.

THE past can never be forgot,
  Nor ever be effaced,
For written 'tis on memory's page,
  With iron pen deep traced.
As for the future, 'tis not ours,
  O'er it we have no sway;
We wait the call which parts us here—
  It may come any day;
But until then we welcome friends,
  And friendship's heart is dear;
We'll clear a corner oot for you
  Wi' richt gude will and cheer.

"Come Ben."

WELCOME to our hearts and hame,
Ye maunna staun' oot on the stane;
Wipe yer feet, I'm a' alane—
"Come ben."

What are ye fuzzling sae aboot,
Wipin' yer brow wi' dirty clout;
Whatever hae ye been aboot—
"Come ben."

Say never venture never win,
It's on the richt ye'll fin' the string;
See on yer feet nae dirt ye bring—
"Come ben."

D'ye tell me it's a morn o' weet,
Or are ye shakin' dust frae feet;
Man! ye hae no been lang to see't—
"Come ben."

But ne'er an answer to her call,
For naebody was there at all;
She spoke to shadow on the wall—
"Come ben."

Ne'er had her pastor ever been,
She had sagacity gae keen,
But women whiles are in a dream—
"Come ben."

Thoughts Beyond Price.

YOUR thoughts for a penny,
My dear little child,
Said a tender old lady,
Whose bearing looked mild;
Now, here is the penny,
But where is your thought?
The child only answered,
Thoughts cannot be bought.

I've many—oh many, a
Thought in my head,
Since the day that they told me
My mother was dead;
They sometimes are wand'ring,
And sometimes they're not,
My thoughts for a penny
Shall never be bought.

Thoughts Beyond Price.

I wonder, dear childie,
  What makes you so cross?
You ought to be softened
  By your greatest loss.
If I should just hand you
  That sovereign of gold,
Your thoughts in a moment
  To me would be told.

Ah! the tender old lady,
  And seemingly mild,
Ne'er fathomed the depth
  Of the heart of a child;
Gold glitters for many,
  And some have a lot;
But even for gold my thoughts
  Ne'er shall be bought.

In Memory of Spunkie.

AFF!—aff every bonnet, uncover a' heids,
Ye little ken, comrades, how sair my heart bleeds;
A frien's gane frae 'mang us, and frien's we a' need:
Our bonnie bit doggie—wee Spunkie is deid.

Wha maist cam' amang us kent weel his kind way,
He'd welcome back warmly at tap o' the brae;
Then wagging his tail wi' a bark o' delight,
He'd view them intently till out of his sight.

A handsome bit doggie wi' finest o' parts,
A gentle wee doggie wi' kindest o' hearts;
He wanted but ae thing to reach yonder goal—
He was but a doggie, and *hadna' a soul.*

They laid him to rest there, aneath yon green mound,
There a' left o' Spunkie is sure to be found;
Nae need to plant lilies to mark out the spot,
For Spunkie can ne'er be—na! never forgot!

"Castles in the Air."

AS we sail adown life's river
  In the early hours of day,
And our thoughts go hither, thither,
  Ever whither and away!
And we dream upon our future,
  Which is sure to be so fair;
Disappointment guards the portals
  Of our "castles in the air."

We shall start a steady business,
  With attention make it pay;
We'll mak' it quite a high-class thing,
  Quite above the common way!
We shall surely make a fortune,
  Yea, be quite a millionaire!—
Disappointment guards the portals
  Of our "castles in the air."

Or do we covet intellect,
  And is science in our line?
We'd carry all before us then,
  Could we rightly work this mine;
Could we but find the reason why,
  Or the wherefore, did we dare—
Disappointment guards the portals
  Of our " castles in the air."

Perhaps I'm of the gentle sex,
  A bright, dashing, fine young lass;
My eye is on a handsome man,
  And one, too, with plenty brass!
I get my man! I get my goud!
  Worries haunt me, with them care—
Disappointment guards the portals
  Of our " castles in the air."

We never can upon this earth,
  E'er live, as in Eden fair;
One day we both have joy and mirth,
  Another we're bent with care.
We wonder what shall be the end
  Of all this sad wear and tear?
Disappointment guards the portals
  Of our " castles in the air."

The Morning Paper.

THE days are dull and callers few,
'Tis hard to hear ought that is new,
But there's that faithfu' frien', and true,
The daily morning paper.

I licht at dawn, for still 'tis dark,
But he's afore me, yon young spark;
And here's the fruit o' a' his wark,
The chatty morning paper.

There's walth o' knowledge in the thing,
Some mak's me greet, some mak's me sing;
Sae there's the coin, my paper bring,
The reg'lar daily paper.

The Morning Paper.

The first page starts wi' a' that's bright,
Children just born unto the light,
Sometimes at morn, and whiles at night,
Like our good daily paper.

We'll pass the marriages as things
Which a' folk ken, for love has wings,
And flees about, or else he clings
To his ain daily paper.

But doon aneath there's mournfu' news,
Yane here, yane there, cled in his hues;
Death tak's a king, he'll nane refuse,
But ne'er our daily paper.

We turn the leaf, and there sae lang,
The piece about the "Grand Old Man;"
He's pintin' furrit wi' his hand
To increased sale o' papers.

Then accidents and tales o' woe,
And grand *faux pas* of so and so,
Bring up the rear, still *statu quo*,
Stands up our daily paper.

The Morning Paper.

Lang may it flourish, news to spread,
'Twere a black nicht, and we were dead,
Except we heard a' that was said
Aboot us in the papers.

For here and there there's drappit doon,
News that has started in the toon,
A' gleaned and garnered by yon loon
What edits daily paper.

The Shorter Catechism.

HOO daur ye file wi' clattie hauns,
  Mismagglin' a' the creed;
The creed your mother gied to you,
  Ay baith in word and deed.

The questions are a' drappin' doon,
  Leaves fleein' here and there;
The very sum and substance o't,
  Seeking the caller air.

Did nay your mother patiently
  Work wi' you day by day,
And aye afore ye gaed to school
  Your question ye'd to say.

But nowadays it's laid aside,
  Unworthy seems to be!
But tak' ye tent—let not it slip,
  Whaurever ye may be.

The Shorter Catechism.

Haud to the Bible first and fore,
  The Shorter comes on next,
And as ye say each question roun',
  Prove it aye wi' a text.

Gang on thro' youth, and dinna lose
  The truths therein contained;
When three-score years and ten's played oot,
  Ye'll hae them weel maintained;

And lying on a bed o' pain,
  Or in a storm at sea,
These questions will arouse the soul
  Wi' muckle energy.

And when all else does faint and fail,
  And you no like to mend,
Start wi' the question at the first,
  Aye—"What is man's chief end?"

The Time o' the Singing o' Birds has Come.

THE spring's noo come! jist hear thae notes
  Frae oot that auld thorn tree!
And there—hear hoo he tunes his pipes
  Wi' that bit soun', "T'wee!" "t'wee!"

But noo he's ta'en the highest branch,
  And pickin' oot his choice,
He warbles oot his heart's desire
  Wi' that transcendent voice!

Baith high and low notes are sae clear—
  Weel modulated too!
Whaur did he learn to sing sae weel,
  Or gat he't as he grew?

For nature's kind—imparts great gifts
  Whaur least of a' we'd think;
Yane wad hae thocht a bird like that
  Wad dae weel but to blink!

Hear hoo sae far he gets in height,
  Thrilling his love-sick ditties!
His shakes, a prima donna touch,
  'Twould startle them in cities!

Ah, gentle bird! ye little ken
  How many sorrowing hearts
Ye lift up frae the very dust,
  When ye gang owre your parts.

Re-union.

ROCKED in the cradle by the fire
The bairnie soundly sleeps;
Her mother never seems to tire,
But while she rocks she weeps.

For far away across the sea
Her Hieland laddie's gane;
Oh! may a blast o' Januar' win'
Blaw weel, and blaw him hame.

The bairnie's dreaming! see the smile
Upon her dimpled cheek!
Are angels hovering near? for see!
Her look so mild and meek.

Rocked in the cradle of the deep,
Jim dreams of his dear wife;
That bundle of humanity,
Which constitutes his life.

He also sees that bonnie bairn,
  That darling little mite!
Could he but get within her reach,
  He'd never leave her sight.

And dreaming thus, he fails to hear
  The glad cry "Land at last!"
Indeed he's only wakened up
  When ship's made fairly fast.

Hame to his bonnie wife and bairn,
  His heart leaps owre a' space;
He'll no believe he's hame at a',
  Till stan'in' face to face.

The Wanderer's Return.

FROM Erin's Isle, a wanderer,
For many years I'd been;
I'd travelled o'er all India's plains,
And Afric's desert seen;
A yearning wish came o'er my heart
My native land to see;
There other hearts and other hopes
Made home seem strange to me.

The house stood there, as it had done
When I was but a child;
The garden and the fields beyond,
And then the tangled wild;
But somehow things were not the same—
The same they ne'er would be;
For other footsteps trod these walks,
And all seemed strange to me.

The Wanderer's Return.

I heard a voice of sweetest tone
  Sing an old plaintive air;
I breathed free! for now, I thought,
  That mellowed face so fair,
Which sang so true, which face I knew—
  At least we'd met! but she—
Yea even she!—'twas not to be—
  Made home seem strange to me.

Ah sure! I thought, on God's big earth,
  I'll find me what is home?
Tho' all is changed, and all is past,
  And all I knew are gone.
Yes! Providence was kind to me,
  And taught me how to find
A home, a heart, a pleasure given
  In treasures of the mind.

The Blackbird.

IN April, oft at early morn
  I dauner doon the brae
To meet the blackbird in the thorn,
  And hear what he's to say.

Sin' langsyne, he's been my frien',
  He opens up his mind,
And tells me o' the cauldriffe folk,
  And them that's aye been kind.

He whispers o' the faithfu' few,
  O' the unfaithfu' thrang;
And then! a weary wailing note
  Is mingled wi' his sang.

The Blackbird.

Guid day, my frien', I maun awa'
  And tak' the road for hame;
It's better far to crack wi' birds
  Than sit ane's sel' alane.

I turned and gaed up by the burn,
  Oh! sic a glorious sicht;
The braes wi' primroses were cled,
  Just opening to the licht.

And over them those million drops,
  Shining so cool and bright;
Like diamond coronets they seemed!
  Dropped by the queen of night.

I thought could such soft influence
  Fall on the hardened heart?
A stronger impulse would be given
  To choose the better part.

But ah! the heart's not like the flowers,
  It opens not, nor bends;
But keeps itself aye firm and fast,
  As Hermon's dew descends.

Cauld stubborn heart—go open! frae
  Proud pedestal come down;
And like the Spring's bright, early flowers,
  Yours may be yet a crown.

Dullness Dispelled.

A VISION comes before me oft
  Of brilliant lovely flowers;
They'd grace the halls of baronets,
  Or e'en my lady's bowers.
Some very bright pink peonies!
  No perfume e'er had they;
With bright brown tasselled centrepiece
  They looked so very gay.

I saw them through a window pane,
  And wondered whence they came;
I saw them next in a friend's home—
  They were the very same.
Since then sad sorrow mingles with
  Thoughts of these laughing flowers;
A shadow o'er that home has passed,
  My friend had darkest hours.

I often ponder o'er these flowers,
  And o'er that chastening rod;
I think how fair all nature is,
  How kind is nature's God;
For while I muse upon the flowers
  The cloud has passed away;
Now tasselled, bright pink peonies,
  Ye reign queens of the day.

Reply to Tolstoi.

TOLSTOI! Count Tolstoi! oh!
How hard upon the muse!
The major and the minor keys
Alike thou dost abuse;
For e'en that mavis, thrilling high
In yonder black thorn tree,
Is nothing more than Parrot Poll!
To such an one as thee.

Where is your book on Life and Death,
Without its poetry?
Life without it were only death,
And death a nullity.
It lives within meandering streams
Rilling down mountain side;
It rests upon the outspread wings
Of swallows as they glide.

It flits around the fairy form
  Of one seen in thy dream;
It's whispered in the tell-tale blush,
  Which lingers in her beam;
And when she's borne from thee afar,
  Borne on an angel's wing!
Hear poetry in every tone,
  As passing she does sing.

The Bird on the Window Sill.

IT sat upon my window sill,
  And peered sae quaintly frae its een;
A bonnie speckled grey and white,
  The prettiest bird I e'er had seen.

And aye it sat upon the sill,
  Piping sae sweetly frae its mou';
The sang it sung was aye the same—
  Sae constant, and sae trusting true.

But puirtith cauld, wi' frost set in,
  And heavy snaw wi' searchin' win';
The flakes fell thick athort the glen;
  The megrim mist maist like to blin'.

But bonnie birdie, spite o' that,
  Sat on my sill, and ne'er did steer;
But blinking wi' its een sae gleg,
  Would maistly say, gae me some cheer.

I widna lose that birdie—No!
  Faithfu' in my adversity;
The simmer frien's wha round me fawned,
  Now take their wings and frae me fly.

But this wee bird sticks fast and firm;
  Darker the day the nearer she
Comes to my heart, and then I feel
  A bird a comforter can be.

A Dream Study.

'TIS beautiful, but still amiss—
Not the kind face that one would kiss,
But one we would admire;
Before the canvas as we stand,
Gazing upon that perfect hand,
We feel we never tire.

But in the other, yonder one!
There's entered something of a tone
Of life, and love, and joy,
And countless beams upon that face
Play hide-and-seek with easy grace;
Ah no! 'tis no sham toy.

But living likeness of a dream
We had, or does it only seem
A dream of what we dreamt?
Why do these eyes look thus on me?
Again distinct my dream I see,
And know now what it meant.

Midnight, 31st December, 1890.

HOW many a joy your words recall,
And once again I'm young and gay;
I bridge the space which lies between
December and my merry May.

And once again, with mirth and glee,
I mingle in the dance and song;
Or gathering wild flowers on the lea,
Am happy as the day is long.

And once again—ah me!—my friend,
Why do those brightest feelings fade?
Or do we make believe they're gone,
And welcome them into the shade?

And now, so far upon our way,
We feel we're led by love and light;
Whole-hearted friendship lingers near;
To yon auld year a last "Good-night."

Happy Days.

OH! days long past come back and linger near,
Your sweetest influence shed on heart so drear
I'm full of doubting, and I'm full of fear—
Come back, oh happy days.

The memory of those other days sheds light,
When all around seems now as black as night;
I struggle with my will with all my might—
Come back, oh happy days.

Sometimes the birds, when twittering 'mong th
trees,
Or a soft cadence breathed upon the breeze,
Speak of those gentler joys which would me ease—
Come back, oh happy days.

I dare not, if I would, go back in thought
To some sad moments which ye also brought;
'Tis not the dark, but bright of you I've sought—
Come back, oh happy days.

Happy Days.

Beside the loved and lost I'd sit me down,
Those who ne'er looked upon me with a frown;
How melancholy surely all has grown!—
Come back, oh happy days.

Be still, my soul, there's comfort in the thought,
Whate'er the past of sorrow has thee brought;
If only thou get what thou oft hast sought?—
Peace in the coming days.

The Weary Heart.

BIRD, cease thy wandering,
  Come near awhile;
Bring me a message,
  My heart to beguile;
Tell of my loved one,
  Far from me gone:
Bring the sweet message
  He thinks of home.

Sing to me, birdie,
  Of his dear ways;
All his thoughts tell me,
  Tell in thy lays;
Take him a message
  From her he loves best,
Then be thou sure, birdie,
  Fly to thy nest.

The Weary Heart.

For I would have thee
  Sing me to sleep;
Thoughts cluster round me,
  Sad and so deep,
Why did he leave me
  All thus alone?
Oh! birdie, sing him
  Back to his home.

Days now are mournful,
  Now he is gone;
Sadness falls deeper,
  All thus alone.
Oh! for a joyful
  Time once again;
Oh! birdie, sing me,
  He'll come again.

The Parson's Comforter.

THE parson goes about his daily ways,
With all the parish troubles in his head;
And takes his Bible out, and reads and prays
Beside the sufferer's chair—the dying bed.

Whate'er the secret skeleton may be,
Doubt, drink, or debt, that keeps within his lair;
When parson comes, the owner turns the key,
And lets him out to squeak and gibber there.

It seems a possibility unguessed,
Or little borne in mind, if haply known,
That he who cheers in trouble all the rest
May now and then have troubles of his own.

Alas! God knows, he has his foe to fight,
His closet atomy, severe and grim;
All others claim his comfort as of right,
But, hapless parson! who shall comfort him?

A friend he has to whom he may repair,
  Besides that One who carries all our grief;
And when his load is more than he can bear,
  He seeks his comforter, and finds relief.

He finds a cottage, very poor and small,
  The meanest tenement, where all are mean;
Yet decency and order mark it all—
  The panes are bright, the step severely clean.

He lifts the latch, his comforter is there,
  Propt in her bed, where now for weeks she stays;
Or, haply, seated knitting in her chair,
  If this be one of those rare "better days."

A tiny woman, stunted, bent, and thin,
  Her features sharp with pain that always wakes;
The nimble hand she holds the needles in
  Is warped and wrenched by dire rheumatic aches.

Sometimes she gets a grateful change of pain,
  Sometimes for half a day she quits her bed;
And, lying, sitting, crawled to bed again,
  Always she knits—her needles are her bread.

Too well she knows what 'tis a meal to miss,
  Often the grate has not a coal of fire;
She has no hope of better things than this:
  The future darkens, suffering grows more dire.

Where will they take her if, betide it should,
  Her stiffened hand the needles cannot ply?
Not to the workhouse—God is very good;
  He knows her weakness—He will let her die.

Sometimes, but seldom, neighbours hear her moan
  Wrung by some sudden stress of fiercer pain;
Often they hear her pray, but none has known,
  No single soul has heard her lips complain.

The parson enters, and a gracious smile
  Over the poor pinched features brightly grows
She lets the needles rest a little while:
  "You're kindly welcome, sir!" Ah, that he know

He takes the Book, and opens at the place—
  No need to ask her which her favourite psalm-
And, as he reads, upon her tortured face
  There comes a holy rapture, deep and calm.

She murmurs softly with him as he reads;
  She can repeat the psalter thro' at will:
He feeds me in green pastures, and He leads,
  He leads me forth beside the waters still.

Yea, thro' death's shadowy valley tho' I tread,
  I will not fear, for Thou dost show the way;
Thy holy oil is poured upon my head,
  Thy loving kindness follows me for aye.

Darkness and Dawn.

A KNOCK cam' tae my chamber door,
I shook in every limb;
Fu' weel I kent what stood outside,
And yet I said, come in.

Entering, it stood upon the floor,
And glowered sae in my een;
The darkest picture o' despair
That ever I had seen.

I said, why art thou come at a',
Why no let me hae rest;
It said, I've come tae bide wi' you,
I'm gaun you sair tae test.

It stretched owre and grupped me,
Then bound me wi' a chain;
I fan' I wis a prisoner,
But no jist quite alane.

For it was there that darkest shade
  That passes owre man's soul;
I felt that I was losing hope,
  And fell into that hole,—

That pit o' fearfu' darkness
  We read o' in the Book;
I battled wi' that dark despair,
  In every fibre shook.

But noo the battle seemed to be
  A' for man's greatest foe;
Wi' clutches lang it graspit me:
  It wadna let me go.

And still into the darkness,
  I felt me going down,
When far aff in the distance
  I heard the sweetest soun'

Of music, jist a little voice
  Kept singing, yes, for sure,
"Earth has nae sorrows
  That Heaven canna cure."

I luckit up, aye farther up,
  I saw a wee bit star,
And aye it twinkled doon on me,
  I wished it no sae far.

And aye, for near and nearer cam'
  That sang that must endure,
"Earth has nae sorrows
  That Heaven canna cure."

If hearts can lichten in despair,
  I fan mine lichter than,
And a' the praise, it maun be gi'en
  Tae that ennobling sang.

It lichtened me, it brichtened me,
  Thro' a' my being rang;
I rose and shook myself, and felt
  I was another man.

A New Year's Greeting.

TO settle doun tae think ava,
  On sic a nicht as this,
Sae dark, sae dowy, dree, and cauld,
  Is onything but bliss;
For far awa' frae warm fireside,
  Oot in the cauld alane,
Hoo comes it those we love sae well,
  Thus banished are frae hame?

Doomed to be pairtet, warld's dower!
  Missed when they little ken,
Whiles when I hear a rustling move,
  I start, and say "Come ben."
Whiles dovering at the gloamin' hour,
  From whence I canna tell,
Comes murmur of a weel kent voice,
  And aye it says "All's well."

A New Year's Greeting.

Weel tae be steekit a' ootside,
  And we within the glow;
Weel tae be keepit i' the dark,
  Hame comforts never know!
Na, na! ye'll no sae preach to me;
  Such doctrines no divine;
Amang this mazy labyrinth,
  The very thread ye'd tyne.

For all these dear ones we will ask
  God's guidance from above,
And round about them we will throw
  The mantle of our love;
May these two shelter them for aye,
  From every foe and fear,
To you my frien', and sae tae them,
  A happy, gude New Year.

The Unsleeping Heart.

I SLEEP, but my heart is awake,
  Howe'er could I settle to rest?
I could not, I would not for ought,
  With all this dispeace in my breast.

I sleep, but my heart is awake,
  It is bent like the bow by a string;
Oh! were I a dove, and could I but fly,
  I should soon soar away on the wing.

I sleep, but my heart is awake,
  With all its forebodings and care;
I'd lay down and die! you ask me for why?
  A spirit that's wounded, who'd bear?

I sleep, but my heart is awake,
  For sorrows of others I mourn;
Ah! many elated, with breath fiercely bated,
  Have treated their fellows with scorn.

The Unsleeping Heart.

I sleep, but my heart is awake,
  I grieve for the penniless poor;
Their meat is hard bread, as heavy as lead,
  And their drink water brought from the m

Reflections.

THO' 'twas early in the morning,
My chamber lamp I lit,
And set myself to read my part,
When on the wall—flit! flit!

Flit! flit! a moving up and down,
A constant rise and fall;
And then I soon made out the thing:
My shadow on the wall.

For as I was, so was it too!
Sometimes more deep, more dark;
Oh! is it so, that every where
I move I leave my mark?

Reflections.

And is it so, that every one
  Thus carries light and shade;
Cheering, or hard'ning hearts we meet
  By deeds and words we've said?

For as I moved on that morn,
  With every rise and fall,
My shadow was my second self,
  As portrayed on the wall.

My Garden.

IN my old-fashioned garden sweet,
  I took a walk one eve;
But strange the place seemed now to me,
  Mine eyes I'd scarce believe:
For here and there, where friends did meet,
  New faces I behold;
The place is not the same to me,
  'Tis not like that of old.

I stumbled o'er new fangled plants,
  Some lank, some lean, some tall;
And children gaily romp about,
  Playing at tig and ball.
But of the many precious flowers,
  Which shed their perfume fine,
None now remain, all wed away,
  Or in a dire decline.

Ah me! these changes touch the heart,
  We too must move aside;
We cannot always bloom on here,
  Our life wont aye abide.
Let us adorn what's left of life
  In garden of the Lord;
The grass may wither, flowers may fade,
  "For ever stands His Word."

The Manly Part.

AWAKE, my frien', put on mair mettle!
There! dinna socher owre the fire;
Gang oot, and in the world do battle,
And trail yer tails weel in the mire.

Thus ta'en frae sel', pith sune will come,
Gang tae the weary, wae, and sad;
And ilka morn as up ye rise,
Pray that ye may mak' some heart glad.

Then health and strength will surely come,
And gratefu' looks will beam on you;
The garlands that were withered then,
Arrayed are now in roseate hue.

See ye a sinner sinned against,
Wha wad do what he canna maun;
Dinna ye by him haughty gang,
To him streetch oot baith heart and haun'.

The Manly Part.

Ye little ken what mighty power
  Temptations haun' has on him laid;
The neebours gether, brimming fu'!
  Clashin' 'bout what he's done and said;

And thus the world's lean charity
  Is ladled out frae empty bowls;
A lordly portion sure! to cheer
  And nourish up these sin-sick souls.

A Wail for Auld Scotland.

YE maybe think I lichtly look
  On verses sae sublime,
Touched by a master hand, and one
  Who loved the auld langsyne;
But no! I love Auld Reeky, wi'
  Her turrets and her towers,
And on her beauty I could sit
  And ruminate for hours.

But sadder thoughts becloud my mind,
  And shadow the bright scene;
Amid Edina's loveliness
  Are hungry souls and lean,
Whose daily round's not sanctified,
  In kitchen, or in hall,
By reading of God's Holy Word,
  Nor yet by prayers' call.

The poem's fine! description's gran'!
  Oh, sich a glorious sicht!
But morally, auld Scotland's wrang,
  Oh! wha will set her richt;
Her Bible, and her Sabbath Day,
  Will sune be the things that were;
Oh! children of the Covenant,
  How can ye so far err?

Your flag is drookit wi' the tears
  O' mony a weary heart,
Your mounts and monuments to me
  Nae pleasure can impart;
Nor can the roseate gowden hue,
  O' spring's fast setting sun,
E'en brighten up the darkest thocht
  That Scotland's day is done.

Ah me! for Scotland's glory now—
  Come back ye days of yore;
Teach us, as once ye taught us, how
  To meet the evermore.
Bind precept and example, too,
  Of those who loved us best;
At last with them, when day is dune,
  May we lie doon and rest.

Somebody's Child.

FAR from her fatherland she sleeps,
God's ways are ever best;
Pillowed on good old Scottish soil,
Her body lies at rest.

For Scottish hearts had felt for her,
The lady all alone;
No wonder, then, that to the last,
Auld Scotland was her home.

Whoe'er she was, or what she was,
Was never clearly known;
She came and went, just with the wind,
As thistle down is blown.

Around the path whereon she trod
There beamed forth many a smile;
If she a tale of sorrow told,
'Twas never clothed in guile.

Somebody's Child.

Poor gentle one! around thy form
  A mystery is thrown;
We would unravel't if we could,
  Now that thy spirit's gone.

For often, when we chanced to see
  Thy face, so meek and mild;
The thought would rise within our heart,
  Thou art somebody's child.

"If We'd Thought."

IF we'd thought at our last meeting
With the friend we loved so dear;
By his grave we'd soon be standing,
Dropping down the silent tear;
Would that word we spoke so lightly
Have been uttered by us then?
Would that, in our silent sorrow,
We could call it back again.

If we'd thought that soon a parting
Would us sever far and wide;
That some of the gladsome faces
Would be soon across the tide;
Would the hasty word and action,
Would the satire sharp and keen,
From our lips have ever fallen,
Or the action e'er be seen?

"If We'd Thought."

If we'd thought the friendly counsel
  Was the last we e'er should hear,
Would we then have scoffed so lightly,
  Let our heedlessness appear?
If we'd thought the kind inquiry
  Soon would cease for evermore,
Would it then have been a trouble?
  Would we then have wished it o'er?

If we'd thought that act of kindness
  Was the last our friend should seek,
Would we have, by cruel harshness,
  Brought the blushes to his cheek?
If we'd thought our heartless folly
  Would have left so deep a sore,
Would we then have spoken rudely?
  Would we not have hushed it o'er?

If we'd thought! alas! the sorrows
  That the words awaken now;
If we'd thought! ah! then the wrinkles
  Would be fewer on the brow;
If we'd thought that death was coming,
  Will that be our latest cry?
God forbid! we know He's coming!
  Let us think! He draweth nigh!

Modern Preaching.

HOW many critics now are heard
About the preaching of the Word;
Our ministers are getting dull,
We must arise and have them stirr'd.

They lay before us simple truths,
Such as a little child may know;
Instead of sticking to the text,
They ever wander to and fro.

We used to have deep truths instill'd
Into our minds with greatest care;
But now comes an uncertain sound
From vacant minds, when now laid bare.

And now give one of them the chance
To say one word in their behalf;
Did we dig deep into our mine,
The better half would count it chaff.

For pop'lar minds are too well trained,
  In lighter readings of the day,
To sit for half an hour or so
  On Sabbath in the good old way,

List'ning to truths of vital point,
  Which press themselves deep down within;
We must them entertain, if we
  Most of our hearers now would win.

A little sarcasm—a dash
  Of peppery-pointed piquancy;
Some poetry, or even Latin,
  Dead language tho' it be, they fancy.

We cannot reach the varied moods,
  So mingled as the rainbow's hue;
Nor can we please the gaping crowd,
  Who cry each day for something new.

But this we'll do in humble trust,
  We'll place before you doctrines tried;
The one grand truth we'll ever preach
  Is Jesus Christ! Him crucified.

To a Friend who Fell on the Ice.

WE were so vexed to hear the news
About your triple fall;
A fall's no canny ony time,
But worse out in the cauld;
Ye'd fair forgotten self, I doubt,
Wi' that young widow braw,
And staunin' clish-ma-claverin',
Got chilled out in the snaw.

It's no for you, nor e'en for me,
At this time o' our life,
To taigle lang in gaun about—
Why, man, no tak' a wife?
Without a wife a house looks bare,
And things go maistly wrang;
She'd cheer you wi' her kindly ways,
While lilting owre a sang.

Meanwhile, I hope the nose is weel!
  Be thankfu' it is there;
A face without a nose, tho' fine,
  Would be most dreadfu' bare;
But honestly, and frae my heart,
  I trust you're nane the waur
O' tumbling doon, thae three times owre,
  Amang that frozen glaur.

Tak' tent a wee! don't let it out!
  That is, sir, if you can,
For folks would be sae apt to say
  That man had got a dram!
We ken you're sober, dacent man,
  Teetotal I'll no say;
Noo cheer you up, and get the wife,
  I bid you noo "Good day."

In Memory.

NO tear we shed, altho' our hearts were breaking,
That day we laid her in the silent tomb;
Shrouded by mother earth she lieth,
Just like a veritable May Queen,
Crowned with flowers.

No want of hope had we in laying low
The mortal form of her we loved so well;
This mortal shall put on immortality,
This we believed of her who lieth,
Crowned with hope.

And loving hands were those which let her down
Into the low, the deep funereal bed;
We shudder at the thought, but still alone,
There, there she lieth,
Crowned with love.

And when the angel trump again shall sound
That last most dread and solemn call;
The spirit to the dust again shall join,
And rise together, to the rainbowed throne,
Crowned with glory.

The Upper Ten.

I'M no that sure that a' is richt
  Wi' our gran' Upper Ten;
They micht swap sides wi' those that hae
  No even a "but and ben."
Their privileges a' the same,
  So say ye! Men are free;
But try thae upper yanes wi' wark,
  When sick, let them abee.

Of stalwart forms and well-set frames,
  They're foreigners to these;
They ken nocht o' the mountain air,
  Or of the seaside breeze;
But yet, oh God! these very men
  Came from Thy hand divine,
In Thine own likeness—why should they
  Thus take the lower line?

Gie them yer haun, gie them yer heart,
  Yer sympathetic a';
And frae the heavens a dounricht pour
  O' blessings on ye'll fa';
"Shouther tae shouther," bare the brunt,
  "Steady boys," fecht the fight;
Britain's ain bairns are nae mair slaves,
  But ransomed by the right.

Climbing Maronne.

COME, boys, noo get ready,
  Let's march and keep steady,
  We're aff tae the Hill o' Maronne;
Wi' umbrella and cloak,
In case of a soak,
  And see that your auld shune are on.

For climbing the braes,
In the heat o' the day,
  We need to be fitly put on;
And wha will be laggard
Is counted a coward—
  We'll climb tae the tap o' Maronne.

We're warm, and we're pantin'
For breath that's awantin',
  I tell you I'm jist fairly gone;
Gae rax me the bottle,
A souk i' my throttle,
  It's fearfu' this climbing Maronne.

But noo at the tap,
Let's tak' a bit nap,
  Then scan a' the prospect aroun';
It's perfect serene!
But what dae ye mean?
  Mean! dinna ye hear, lad, that soun'?

And fast doun the mountain,
Jist like a wild fountain,
  The rain it is dashing straight doun;
While doun thro' the hills
Fly the numerous rills,
  It's watery sure this Maronne.

And noo up the Clunie,
Near whaur is the tounie,
  In which my wee cottage stands lone;
I'll rest me sae sweet,
And my sleep shall be deep,
  Wi' climbing that Hill of Maronne.

Vain Regrets.

AND shall it wither, like those faded flowers,
That constant loving heart;
And canst thou so estranged be from me?
So willing now to part!
Then take my life, with all its tinselled show,
Yea take my very all;
Without thy love this life would be a blank,
But wormwood, and but gall.

How often have I striven hard to please
In all those little things,
Which ever make the sum and substance of
All that life ever brings;
And yet I seem to want the manner how,
Besides the minute when!
To do, what seems to others easy work,
To please exacting men.

Vain Regrets.

Ah well! you may be right, and I as wrong,
    We'll let things be;
Another year will bring about a change,
    And then we'll see;
Thus to be doubted! while I've striven hard
    To do my very best:
There! take your flowers, your withered heart;
    Now I shall sweetly rest.

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